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SUBJECT: NINEWA: PROMINENT - AND SHADY - SUNNI SHEIKH ON SECURITY AND
PROVINCIAL POLITICS

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CLASSIFIED BY: Cameron Munter, PRT Leader, Provincial
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REASON: 1.4 (a), (b), (d)

SUMMARY AND COMMENT

¶1. (C) With the advent of democracy in Iraq, Ninewa's tribal leaders in the Sunni Arab community fear losing their traditional influence. However, there are tribal leaders working behind the scenes who still hold sway over politics and business affairs, especially such persons with strong ties to the inner sanctum of the Iraqi government. Sheikh Hannash might be one of these tribal leaders (he has close business and political ties to Iraqi Vice President Sheikh Ghazi Al Yawar). Hannash, who has a shady past, a lot of money, and has had dealings with Anti-Iraqi Forces (AIF), believes that security forces in the province should be more representative, that proper checks and balances be in place before any future elections take place, and that the USG could help to better these issues and the economic situation in Iraq. End Summary and Comment.

¶2. (C) PRT Leader and PolOff met with Sheikh Ghazi Hassan Hannash Al Ta'i in Mosul on April 2.

SECURITY ISSUES

¶3. (C) Hannash repeatedly urged for the creation of more representative security forces and the reinstatement of the 4th Division of the former Iraqi Army (IA). Taking aim at militias in southern Iraq, Hannash said the IA could not be "sectarian." While more work would need to be done to make the police and army in Ninewa more reflective of its diverse population, certain things were necessary to really improve security. Bringing back the IA 4th Division, he said, would work best since under the former regime the force was not sectarian. Regarding the Iraqi Police (IP), Hannash said he personally thought highly of Provincial Chief of Police Wathiq Al Qudir, but that there were still many corrupt officers on the force that needed to be removed. He accused Kurdish criminals of dressing in IP uniforms and searching cars. He claimed this was a serious problem that needed to be addressed with the public,

since criminals were taking advantage of motorists by harassing them. It was causing the public to lose confidence in Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), he claimed. Any effort to correct the problem should be jointly addressed by IA and IP, together, with help from the USG.

14. (C) Hannash said he did not understand how the USG could not control the security situation in Iraq, since it could "control the whole world." He accused CF and ISF of relying too much on "questionable intelligence" when conducting raids. Tensions with the public were building as a result, he claimed. Hannash recommended warning first time suspects rather than arresting them. Identifying a guarantor would then help to watch over the suspect and keep him out of trouble. But if the suspect was continuing his engagement in criminal and terrorist activities then he could be prosecuted. Hannash said he feared too many innocent people were taken in to custody. He said mutual respect was necessary to strengthen ties between Iraqis and Americans.

PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS

15. (C) Hannash recommended provincial elections take place as soon as possible, but only if the democratic process could be assured. He called the current provincial government "butchers from the streets" since he believed they were unqualified for their jobs. He said all political candidates should be screened for their qualifications before being allowed to run for office. Hannash suggested establishing election committees made up of all parties and ethnicities to observe voting on election day. After the polls were closed the ballots should be immediately counted in front of the committee, he said, since it was the transit of election materials that was most susceptible to tampering.

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ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

16. (C) The economic state of the country was "in shambles," claimed Hannash. He said he could not understand how a country so rich in natural resources had such a difficult time feeding its people. He recommended that the Islamic aid organization Awqaf work with the Ministry of Finance in Baghdad to help the poor. A committee, or several committees, could be established to address issues of poverty, he said. If a social safety net could be established with help from the U.S., he claimed, such efforts might even better Iraqi public opinion of the USG.

COMMENT

17. (C) We need to be very careful with whatever Hannash tells us. Hannash allegedly has ties to insurgent activity and the former Baathist regime, and was known to be an associate of Saddam Hussein. His name continually surfaces during conversations with contacts in Ninewa province. Interestingly enough, he was given the opportunity to participate in the constitutional committee in June 2005 as a representative of the Sunni Arab population. He accused the USG of bringing President Jalal Talabani and Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) President Massoud Barzani to power. He also claimed that Iraq's security and economic situation was entirely in the hands of the U.S. Hannash might never admit that he and his countrymen are in charge of their own future. It seems he is quite content to blame the USG for problems in Iraq instead.
MUNTER